

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

March 23rd, 2021

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday March 23rd, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, Shirley Canniff, and Associate Member Sarah Carrier were present. Associate Member Scott Lever was not present for this meeting. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Tim Lecuivre, Felicity Beal, Phil Tedesco

Members of the Public: Elaine Blackman, Elena Bartholomew, Michael Smith

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

Elena Bartholomew was present on the Zoom call. Ms. Bartholomew requested that the Park and Recreation Commission look into the removal of a trash barrel located at the top corner of the Robbins Farm Park. She stated that recently on multiple occasions that this barrel was overflowing. She believes it that this receptacle is mostly filled with dog waste left by park users. Ms. Bartholomew believes removing the barrel at this specific location will be an improvement to the park, allowing users to take advantage of the trash receptacles located on the parks edge on Eastern Avenue.

Correspondence Received: Lauren Jaeger, Thorndike Wild Flowers

Mr. Connelly stated that Recreation received correspondence from Lauren Jaeger. Ms. Jaeger reached out to request that Wildflowers be planted at Thorndike Field. Mr. Connelly discussed this briefly. Ms. Mayer noted that this item will be discussed further at an upcoming Commission meeting.

North Union/Lussiano Field & Playground Tree Planting Request – Phil Tedesco & Arlington Tree Warden, Tim Lecuivre

Mr. Connelly introduced a tree planting plan request for North Union/Lussiano Field. Mr. Connelly noted that a new playground was placed at this location in 2020. The addition of these new trees would be an improvement to the site and its overall planting plan. Mr. Connelly noted that this is formally being presented to the Commission for their feedback and approval.

Tim Lecuivre, Tree Warden for the Town of Arlington, was present to speak on this matter. Mr. Lecuivre provided background information on his role and the proposed planting plan. Mr. Lecuivre stated that during a previous planned planting, (3) trees planted did not take/make it due to natural factors. The proposal of the planting of the (3) new trees, including (2) London Planetrees and (1) Tulip Tree, would replace these.

Phil Tedesco was also present on the call. Mr. Tedesco is a neighbor that has been involved with the overall project. He met with Mr. Connelly on site to discuss the proposed tree plantings. Mr. Tedesco noted the property has open space which plantings can be placed. Mr. Tedesco stated the placement of a London Planetree at the entrance to the playground would provide shade and help define the entrance to the property. It was noted that the other (2) proposed trees would be planted along the path's edge that goes around the playground. Mr. Tedesco believes these plantings would enhance the site. Mr. Tedesco shared his appreciation for Mr. Lecuivre, stating that with the Tree Warden's guidance these trees can be planted properly, resulting in the best chance for survival.

Ms. Mayer recapped the planting plan being discussed. It was noted that a commitment has been made from individuals in the neighborhood to water these new plantings regularly. Mr. Connelly added that the locations of the (2) proposed tree plantings along the path were originally locations where boulders would be placed. The intent of this was to keep park users on the foot path. However, this did not end up occurring. Placing trees in these two locations will help serve a similar purpose.

Ms. Rothenberg asked Mr. Lecuivre about the health of the other tree plantings which were included in the playground project. Mr. Lecuivre responded, stating that the other plantings are in good shape. These trees are starting to bud and the Town will have a better understanding of the health of the trees once they start to leaf. Mr. Lecuivre stated that he was

happy the project's contractor had experience with tree planting. The contractor was also involved in the watering plan for the site. Ms. Rothenberg asked if there have been discussions or if a plan is in place to add additional trees along the property's walkways. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Lecuire responded, stating that there is space available and the opportunity to add additional tree plantings in the future. The site's watering plan was discussed. Mr. Tedesco stated that plant watering at this location has gone smoothly so far. A group of volunteers have been sharing this responsibility since last summer, using a SignUpGenius to coordinate the watering schedule and responsibilities. Mr. Tedesco noted that the current plantings onsite were watered through October of last year. The goal is that plantings will be watered at least twice week through this spring and summer. Ms. Canniff noted that she was very happy about the selected locations for these proposed plantings. At this time, all other Commissioners agreed and stated that they were happy to move forward with the plantings. Ms. Rothenberg requested that the watering plan and commitment from the neighbors be included on the vote. This was agreed upon by Commission Members.

At this time, Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to approve the planting plan for the (3) trees at North Union/Lussiano Field, as discussed and including the watering plan/commitment. This motion was seconded by Ms. Canniff. The motion to approve the tree plantings at North Union/Lussiano Field, as outlined and discussed, was approved by the Commission 5-0 at 7:26pm.

Robbins Farm Tree Planting Request Along Eastern Avenue – Arlington Tree Warden, Tim Lecuire

Mr. Connelly outlined a tree planting request for several trees to be place at Robbins Farm Park. These proposed plantings are along the edge of the property along Eastern Avenue. Backstory on this request was provided, stating that the original idea was proposed during a site walk through with Friends of Robbins Farm member, Elaine Blackman. Mr. Connelly then went to the Town's Tree Warden, Tim Lecuire, to discuss this. Mr. Lecuire really liked this idea and jumped on it.

Mr. Lecuire was present on the call to speak further on this. He stated several decades ago, there were trees placed on the property along Eastern Avenue. Mr. Lecuire discussed that the Town traditionally plants (150) trees around Arlington in both the fall and spring seasons annually. Due to COVID-19, no plantings occurred in the spring of 2020. To make up the difference, the Town planted (200) trees last fall, and will also plant (200) trees in the spring and fall of 2021. Mr. Lecuire stated that the Town already has trees ordered for this process, several which could be used and planted at Robbins Farm. He then discussed the planting plan and the trees which he is proposing. Trees species proposed included Hackberry, Lindens, and Tulip trees. Mr. Lecuire stated that these species are a good fit for the area and do no produce large acorns, fruit, etc. They do not need to worry about funding, as the trees have already been ordered. He believes the proposed planting of several trees at Robbins Farm Park, along Eastern Avenue, will be an improvement to the park and street.

Ms. Blackman was also present on the call to represent the Friends of Robbins Farm. At this time, she shared feedback from members. Ms. Blackman stated that member Mike Smith previously did research on the species of trees being proposed to and has concerns regarding them. Mr. Smith was also present on the call. At this time, Mr. Smith asked several general questions regarding the tree species outlined above. These questions related to and included questions regarding the species themselves, their history in the Town/region, planting methods, etc. Mr. Lecuire responded to these questions. He stated that the proposed species have been planted year after year in Arlington for many years. Mr. Lecuire stated they have done very well here in Town, especially in public right ways. In Mr. Lecuire professional opinion, these trees will do well in this location. He noted that regardless of the location or species, tree plantings do not always make it. Out of the (150) trees planted each spring and fall annually, about 2-3% of them will not take and survive. He noted that this is a part of the planting process and that there are many factors to why a tree may not survive. Factors include the weather, species type, soil, watering, etc. It was determined that Mr. Smith would speak with Mr. Lecuire offline if he had any further questions.

Ms. Mayer confirmed that these trees would be planted by Town staff. She also asked about the watering plan for these proposed trees. Mr. Lecuire stated the DPW would do some scheduled watering, but they would be looking for help from the Friends group or neighbors to help with watering, as their help allows for the best chance of survival. Ms. Blackman asked about a watering source on site. It was confirmed that one is located within the garden. Ms. Rothenberg discussed that citizens helped with previously plantings. She believes this is a good idea and should occur again, stating it would be good to have kids get involved. Ms. Blackman stated the group would be open to watering and will speak with Ms. Rothenberg offline. Mr. Smith said that he is a gardener and stated the community garden gate is locked. This and other

ideas around a plan to water the trees were discussed. Mr. Connelly noted that no matter what, they would determine a plan and make a commitment to getting the trees watered.

Commission Members shared their thoughts and feedback at this time. Ms. Canniff shared concerns about the root systems of the proposed plantings relating to the planned playground work at Robbins Farm. Mr. Connelly stated that this is a few years out and should not be an issue. Mr. Lasker asked about the proposed planting locations, requesting if the alignment could be closer to the existing trees and sidewalk. Mr. Lasker is concerned that the current planned locations may be too close to existing irrigation lines, which could result in future issues. Mr. Lecuire stated that it is possible to move the proposed locations closer to the street. He is willing to work on determining the best planting locations for the property and everyone involved. Ms. Mayer suggested that Mr. Lecuire, Mr. Connelly, and Mr. Lasker all walk the site together to look at irrigation.

At this time, Mr. Walker made the motion to approve the proposed tree plantings at Robbins Farm Park and along Eastern Avenue as discussed, contingent on the watering plan and final planting locations. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. Commission Members voted to approve these plantings, as outlined, with a vote of 5-0 at 7:48pm.

Field Policy Working Group Policy Modification Recommendations

Mr. Connelly discussed with the Commission the process and findings of the Field Policy Working Group. He shared this information with everyone present via PowerPoint. This working group was made up by a variety of individuals from Town, many of which representing youth sports organizations. Elena Bartholomew, former Commission Member, was also a part of the working group and was present on the call. At this time, Mr. Connelly discussed the group's process and went over their findings, highlights, and proposed changes. Items include high school sports schedules, non-resident groups & usage, field closings, permit holders, new sports organizations, fees, general scheduling, etc. Mr. Connelly noted that one matter heavily discussed was if sports organizations should be charged per participant or by hours of usage. The task force looked into other local community's field policies, stating that many charge per participant. Arlington currently follows this model and will continue to do so this year.

Mr. Connelly discussed one of the main factors which led to the creation of this task force group. This was the topic of block scheduling vs slot scheduling. This topic has been discussed in Arlington for many years. The current system in place is block scheduling. Mr. Connelly stated that this year, the department will be moving forward with block scheduling for sports organizations. However, once youth sports organizations have determined their final practice and game schedules, they are being asked to return unused, available times, back to the Recreation Department. This will allow these times to be assigned and used by other users and groups, rather than being unused.

Ms. Mayer thanked everyone that was involved with the process. Ms. Rothenberg had questions regarding block scheduling vs. slot scheduling. She stated that she understands there are pros and cons to both ways, but believes slot scheduling will make user groups more accountable for the field times they request. Ms. Rothenberg asked about accountability and asked if the department would be regularly checking in on groups. Mr. Connelly believes that issues regarding the non-use of times requested occur mostly on the weekends. With numerous locations in Town, the department does not have staffing to check on each location regularly (numerous locations, numerous times per day). Mr. Connelly noted that he plans to evaluate the field times that are "returned" to the department and will go from there. Mr. Connelly also noted that the idea around the field working group or changes to the field policy is not in a financial interest from Recreation or the DPW. The idea behind this is to have the best system in possible to maximize the amount of use with the fields available. Going to an hourly field rate will result in much higher field fees per year for organizations. This is not the goal. Elena Bartholomew talked about organizations swapping field times. Ms. Rothenberg stated that access to field times should be given equally to all groups, no matter their size. She stated that many groups or individuals looking to start groups were not given equal access to field times in the past and were pushed away. Ms. Canniff agreed with this. Mr. Vaillette noted the department receives requests frequently from outside user groups to use fields. However, these groups are looking to rent fields to then offer a program/league at a fee for the participant. He noted that this is against the Town's policy. Mr. Connelly expanded on this matter. The Commission and Mr. Connelly continued to discuss this for a short time.

Ms. Mayer noted that the topics discussed have been points of conversation for many years. She asked Mr. Connelly for clarification on the line item regarding non-residents and Town Employees. Mr. Connelly noted that traditionally, Town of Arlington Employees or non-residents that worked for an Arlington based business are considered as residents when it

comes to field requests. The example used is if an individual who works for an Arlington based company, but does not live in Town, submits a field request for usage by that company. This would be looked at as if the request is coming from a resident, as the business is based in Arlington. Ms. Mayer wants to watch this and discuss this further in the future, as this may lead to potential issues. A discussion around why fees are in place occurs. It was noted that fees are collected to go towards the cost to help maintain fields and keep them in the best shape possible. However, the amount of field fees collected is not near the total cost that it takes to do all the maintenance. Several other Commission Members asked for clarification on points outlined in the policy.

At this time, Mr. Connelly thanked everyone who was involved in the field working group. Ms. Mayer asked if Mr. Connelly is looking for the Commission to vote on this matter. Mr. Connelly stated that he is looking for a vote of approval on the proposed amendments, subject to change at a future date. The field permit fee and other specific items will be reviewed at the end of the season. A motion to approve the Field Policy as discussed, including the proposed amendments, was made by Ms. Canniff. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The Commission voted to approve the Field Policy, as discussed and amended, with a vote of 5-0 at 8:42pm.

Somerville Homeless Coalition Event

An event request received from the Somerville Homeless Coalition was discussed by the Commission. Information on this request was shared with Commissioners prior to this meeting. Mr. Connelly shared his screen to present a PowerPoint on the event for those present. The event being proposed is "Sleep In Sleep Out", which the organization is looking to hold on Friday April 30th at Thorndike Field. Mr. Connelly stated that he has forwarded this event request to the Arlington Board of Health for feedback and their approval. He stated that he wants to make sure the BOH is onboard and that all current COVID safety protocols are followed. Mr. Connelly has not heard back yet from them on this request.

Felicity Beal, of the Somerville Homeless Coalition, was present to speak on their request. Ms. Beal noted that this would be a new community event for the non-profit organization, replacing the gala and auction which is typically held. The idea around the event is for several of the organization's managers to sleep outside, standing in solidarity with their homeless clients. Ms. Beal noted that many of these homeless individuals live in the woods located just behind the Thorndike Fields. The Somerville Homeless Coalition is looking to place about (15) tents on the field to be slept in. The timeframe would be from 7:00pm on 4/30/21 to 7:00am 5/1/21. One of the individuals that would be present through the entirety of the event is Arlington Police Officer, Joseph Canniff. While a banner will be placed on site to promote the event and cause, the event will not be open to the public. Ms. Beal stated that they plan to have COVID safety protocols and will enforce social distancing if approved. Even though they have not heard back from the Board of Health, they are looking for the Commission's approval to move forward.

At this time, Commission Members shared their thoughts and feedback. Questions included if a collection bucket, for donations, would be used at the event. Ms. Beal stated that she was unaware if this would occur. Ms. Mayer stated that this would not be allowed, as soliciting in Town parks is against the bylaws. Mr. Connelly stated that in the event the Commission approves this event, it must also be approved by the Arlington Board of Health in order to take place. Mr. Connelly added, stating that Recreation has been receiving numerous event requests. Mr. Connelly believes if the Commission is to approve this event and allow it to move forward, other special event request will need to be reviewed and allowed if those events can safely be held. Mr. Connelly stated that there needs to be consistency across the board. Ms. Mayer asked if the event is approved, for the group to make sure that advertising of the event makes it clear that it is not open to the public. The public can support the event and the cause, but will not be allowed to be present at Thorndike on April 30th. Ms. Beal stated that they plan to not put the event location on advertising material.

Mr. Lasker made the motion to approve the Somerville Homeless Coalition event at Thorndike Field on 4/30/21, as discussed and pending the Arlington Board of Health's approval. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. The Commission approved this event, pending BOH approval, with a vote of 5-0 at 8:04pm.

Capital Project Updates

Reservoir Phase II Building Project

Mr. Connelly reported that water testing for the new filtration system, installed in Phase I of the Reservoir Beach project, will be occurring soon. Additional information on this was included in the meeting packet sent to Commission Members. Mr. Connelly stated that building work included in Phase II of the project is underway and going smoothly. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Walker will continue to meet weekly onsite with the contractor until building work is completed.

Reservoir Phase II Site Work Project

Mr. Connelly stated that they will be moving forward with the contractor, SumCo, on project alternates 1-6. Mr. Connelly noted that they are still waiting to hear back on a Land and Water Conservation Grant, which could provide up to \$300,000.00 in additional funding. If the Town is awarded the grant for this project, they will need to review the project's site work with the contractor as a potential change order. Mr. Lasker asked fellow Commission Members if a formal vote was needed on the decision to not move forward with the rubberized surfacing material. Mr. Connelly stated that this was up to the Commission. It was determined that this will be determined and discussed further in the event that the Town is awarded the pending grant.

Hill Hill Playground ADA project

Mr. Connelly stated an initial site meeting with the contractor overseeing the ADA path work occurring at Hill's Hill has taken place. He is hopeful that project work will begin in the next 2-3 weeks. Mr. Connelly noted that the project will include a new accessible gravel path, connecting the parking lot to the Hill's Hill playground and field. Additional paths will also be placed, making the location accessible from the Minuteman Bike Path. The other path will go down a portion of the tree line of Hill's Hill Field, which will create an accessible viewing space for spectators. Mr. Connelly noted that the placement of this specific path will result in the relocation of an irrigation box currently in place.

Rink ADA Spectator Seating

No update to report at this time.

FY 22 Projects

Mr. Connelly noted that the CPA Commission is in full support of moving forward with the total amount of funding requested for the Hurd Field and Spy Pond Playground projects planned during Fiscal Year 2022. Mr. Connelly stated that the bids for the Wellington Park Project were due on March 17th. He will be requesting more information on the bids received. He also noted that the final Town of Arlington Field and Playground Feasibility Study, which was recently completed by Stantec, has been sent out to Commissioner and posted for public view on the Town's website.

Task Group Updates: Field Policy, Town Wide Playground

No updates to report at this time.

Recreation and Rink Updates

Mr. Connelly provided an update on this. Items discussed in this update included the planning of spring and summer programs through the department. Dozens of spring program sections will be starting in the next several weeks. Recreation's first program of the spring, Youth Archery, began on Monday of this week. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Vaillette have been working with Magnolia Community Garden Members to make improvements to the site for the 2020 season and beyond. It was noted that the (6) hours mandatory gardening requirement of the communal garden plot space was removed for the garden's policy. Magnolia Community Garden plot holders can still be involved and contribute their time to the communal garden plot at Magnolia still, but it is no longer a requirement for them.

As discussed in previous Commission Meetings, Recreation will be implementing a reservation system for Town tennis courts this spring. The court reservation system, through PlayLocal, will give community members the ability to reserve tennis courts ahead of time. Permanent signage outlining this system and how it works has been placed at all tennis courts in Town. Mr. Connelly briefly discussed how the system will work. User can access the system online or through a mobile application. They will then need to create an account. At each site, specific courts have been assigned court numbers. While each individual site has numerous courts (4-5 courts at each location) only (2) courts will have the ability to be reserved. All other courts will be available for public play on a first come, first serve basis (except at time when courts are scheduled and being used for programming through Recreation). Mr. Connelly noted that there will be restrictions on how many hours users can reserve courts per day/week/month. No fee will be charged for residents; however a \$25.00 reservation fee will be

charge for non-residents looking to reserve courts ahead of time. The PlayLocal tennis court reservation system in Arlington will go live April 1st and information on this will be added to the Department's website.

Approval of Minutes – 2/23/21 & 3/9/21

The approval of the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for February 23rd and March 9th were both discussed. Several edits need to occur as followed:

Edits Discussed for the 2/23/21 Meeting Minutes

Page 1

- Shirley Canniff was not present for this meeting. Edit and make changes throughout accordingly.

Page 2

- Update wording regarding "goal of task force"
- Update "task force visited" to "task force first identified potential location and then visited"
- Add Emily Sullivan as member of task force. Not originally listed.

Page 3

- Chang "buildability" to "constructability"
- Crusher Lot spelled incorrectly.

Page 4

- Change "Hill's Hill to "Crusher Lot"
- Remove statement regarding email sent

Edits Discussed for the 3/9/21 Meeting Minutes

Several grammatical errors occurred in this document. These are to be corrected with no changes occurring to the subject matter of the document.

The motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting on February 23rd, as amended, was made by Mr. Lasker. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. The Commission voted to approve the February 23rd, 2021 Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes as amended, with a vote of 4-0, at 9:12pm. Ms. Canniff abstained from this vote, as she was not present at the February 23rd meeting.

The motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting on March 9th, as amended, was made by Ms. Canniff. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The Commission voted to approve the March 9th, 2021 Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes as amended, with a vote of 5-0, at 9:14pm.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings: Next Meeting April 13th, 2021

- Bike Rack Placement Recommendation Review – 4/13/2021
- Friends of Crusher Lot Clean-up and Signage Request – 4/13/2021

Other

- Commissioners discussed their concerns related to the continued increase of unleashed dogs on Town of Arlington property, including parks. This matter is to be discussed further in a future meeting.

Ms. Canniff made the motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 9:44pm. The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.